



How to Spice Up a Read Aloud

During my students teaching, I read aloud daily to my class. I discovered that some of the students in my class struggled with sitting still and listening for long periods. In order to help keep everyone engaged I began employing a variety of strategies that I list in detail below.

Preparation: Before I read the chapter aloud, I read it to myself and mark places I want to stop and think aloud, questions to ask the students, journal ideas and word definitions.

During the Read Aloud:

- 1) Words of the Day – I choose two or three words that appear more than once in the chapter, I write these on chart paper before read aloud and write a kid-friendly definition. When I begin the chapter, I review the Words of the Day and ask the students to give me a thumbs-up whenever they hear these words read aloud. This is a fun way to keep students engaged in actively listening. When students give me a thumbs-up, I nod approvingly or smile without losing my place in the book.
- 2) Stop and Jot – I use the document camera to model thinking aloud then I jot down my idea in my reading journal. Sometimes I write a sentence stem and ask the students to finish the sentence in their journal.
- 3) Journaling – Before I begin, I post a journal question on the board. Students respond to the question in their reading journals for a few minutes then share their response with a partner.
- 4) Think Aloud - When I come to a post-it note in the book I think aloud. If it seems as though stopping to think aloud will ruin the flow of the reading, I will ignore the post-it and continue.
- 5) Turn and Talk – If I come to place in the book where I want the students to answer a question; I ask them to talk to their neighbor for about 30 seconds. I discovered that if I use turn and talk too frequently, the students get distracted but if I do not use it at all, some of them lose interest.
- 6) Calling on Students – Sometimes I call on individual students to answer questions about the book. I try to call on students when I have factual questions about what happened in the book or if I need to identify a certain character because these are frequently short answers. If I want to engage students in thinking critically about a certain character or issue in the book, I use a turn and talk or stop and jot. When I called on individual students often, the other students became disengaged.

